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Managing Water in the West

Colorado River: Lower Basin Shortage Guidelines and Coordinated Reservoir Operations Strategies Project

**2007 AOP Consult Meeting
Draft Project Alternatives
June 16, 2006**



**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Reclamation**

Project Overview



- Drought
- Scoping
- Key Considerations
- Proposed Action
- Draft Alternatives
- Consultations
- Schedule

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Drought Conditions

- Drought conditions have impacted storage in the Colorado system
- To date, there has never been a shortage in the Lower Basin and there are currently no shortage guidelines
- Lower Basin shortage guidelines and coordinated reservoir operations strategies are needed to:
 - provide a degree of certainty for water users in the Lower Basin with regard to future water supplies;
 - delay the onset and magnitude of shortages; and
 - maximize the protection afforded to water supply, hydropower production, recreation, and environmental benefits by water storage in Lakes Powell and Mead

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Scoping

- May 2005 –Secretary directed Reclamation to engage in a process to develop guidelines for Lower Basin shortages and the operation of Lakes Powell and Mead under low reservoir conditions
- Summer 2005 - Solicited public comments on proposed content, format, mechanisms and analysis
- Fall 2005 - Announced intent to initiate NEPA process, solicited public comments on scope and alternatives development
- March 2006 – Federal Register Notice of Scoping Summary Report and refinement of scope

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Key Considerations Identified

- Importance of encouraging conservation of water
- Importance of considering reservoir operations at all operational levels
- Interim nature of operational guidelines

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Elements of Proposed Federal Action

- Shortage strategy for Lake Mead and the Lower Division states
- Coordinated operation of Lakes Powell and Mead
- Mechanism for the storage and delivery of system and non-system water in Lake Mead (programmatic element)
- Proposed modification/extension of the existing Interim Surplus Guidelines

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Draft Alternatives

- No Action
- Basin States
- Conservation Before Shortage
- Water Supply
- Reservoir Storage

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Consultation and Cooperation Efforts

- Basin States
- Non-Governmental Organizations
- Tribes
- Republic of Mexico
- Cooperating Agencies

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Project Schedule

- Summer 2005 Solicited public comments on content, format, mechanisms and analysis to be considered to address drought and other management challenge
- Fall 2005 Announced intent to initiate NEPA process and solicited public comments on scope and alternatives development
- March 31, 2006 Scoping report published
- **June 2006** **Proposed alternatives will be published**
- **July 2006** **Initiating resource analysis**
- December 2006 Draft EIS will be published
- September 2007 Final EIS will be published
- December 2007 Record of Decision will be issued

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An aerial photograph of a large concrete dam with multiple spillways, situated in a deep, arid mountain valley. The reservoir behind the dam is filled with blue-green water. The surrounding landscape is rugged and rocky, with some sparse vegetation. The sky is clear and blue.

Shortage Guidelines and Coordinated Operations under Low Reservoir Conditions Project

**Terry Fulp, Project Manager
Lower Colorado Region**

**Randy Peterson, Project Manager
Upper Colorado Region**

**Project website:
<http://www.usbr.gov/lc/region/programs/strategies.html>**

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